United Nations A/64/87–E/2009/89

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 June 2009

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session
Item 49 of the preliminary list*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2009
Geneva, 6-31 July 2009
Items 4, 6, 7(f), 8, 13 and 14 of the provisional agenda**

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2008 of the Economic and Social Council

Implementation of and follow-up to major international United Nations conferences and summits

Coordination, programme and other questions: ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265

Economic and environmental questions

Social and human rights questions

* A/64/50.
** E/2009/100.

09-36313 (E) 010709

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Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report reviews the horizontal and vertical linkages that have been established among the different parts of the integrated follow-up architecture to enhance coherence in the follow-up to conferences. By providing an in-depth assessment of a cross-cutting theme common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, the report illustrates how the annual ministerial review has assumed the function of providing substantive coherence to the follow-up to conferences. It also describes how the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, as a high-level forum with a balanced participation of key actors and a clear representation of multi-stakeholder positions, can help advance the implementation of internationally agreed development goals and, through them, the integrated follow-up to conferences. It further elaborates how the specific meeting of the General Assembly focused on development could provide similar substantive coherence for the work of the Assembly and its relevant Committees.

The report finds that over the past several years, key provisions of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B, 60/265 and 61/16 have been implemented. It also attempts to establish that, with the introduction of the new functions of the Economic and Social Council and the specific meeting of the Assembly focused on development, there is the potential to move the integrated and coordinated follow-up to a new level by reorienting its focus away from process-related coordination to substantive coherence. To facilitate the reorientation of the integrated follow-up to conferences, a quadrennial report is recommended. Such a report would give an overall assessment of where the international community stands in implementing the outcomes of international conferences and summits, one year prior to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities and the subsequent adoption of the new strategic documents of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/29, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations on the periodicity of the report on the role of the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of the report.

2. The report describes the underlying approach of the integrated follow-up to conferences to date (sect. I). It then reviews the evolution of the conference follow-up architecture (sect. II) and its implications for the periodicity of the report of the Secretary-General, with a view to adding the best possible value to the advancement of the integrated follow-up to conferences (sect. III). A section devoted to recommendations concludes the report (sect. IV).

3. Over the past two decades, the major United Nations conferences and summits have together resulted in the emergence of a shared vision of development. This vision is based on the growing consensus within the international community that integrated, holistic approaches that take into consideration the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development are the best way to advance development. This broad-based framework laid the groundwork for the Millennium Summit, which led to the adoption of the time-bound goals and targets known as the Millennium Development Goals.

4. In 2005, when world leaders returned to assess progress, they recognized that progress on the achievement of many of the internationally agreed development goals was off track in a number of countries. To close the implementation gap, they pledged to develop and implement comprehensive national development strategies to pursue national development priorities and achieve internationally agreed development goals. To speed up implementation, they also mandated two new functions to the Economic and Social Council: the annual ministerial review and the biennial Development Cooperation Forum.

5. At the World Summit, they further stressed that the Millennium Development Goals could only be achieved if they were approached together with the other goals and targets of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Calls for an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences at all levels gained additional momentum with the endorsement of a broad vision of development, which is now commonly referred to as the United Nations development agenda and which encompasses the internationally agreed development goals derived from the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Over the years, the Economic and Social Council has promoted the integrated follow-up to conferences based on a two-pronged approach. At the institutional level, it has promoted enhanced architectural coherence, with the aim of transforming the diversity and complexity of the United Nations system into a source of strength so that organizations, both normative and operational, acting alone or in concert, can apply their varied strength to the common purpose of achieving development for all. At the substantive level, the Council has advanced a holistic approach to economic and social development that takes into account the interrelatedness of the different goals and targets of the major United Nations conferences.

7. One major challenge that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council faced when promoting an integrated follow-up was that, while conferences had adopted an all-encompassing approach, national Governments and the United Nations system, which had been entrusted with their implementation, continued to operate largely along sectoral lines. During the initial years of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences, the Assembly and the Council therefore devoted much of their attention to promoting coherence, cooperation and coordination through the establishment of linkages. They established both vertical linkages, running from global to local actors, and horizontal linkages, to connect institutions across different sectors. While little progress was made in the initial years with regard to the follow-up to conferences, more recently the introduction of the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum marked a major step forward.

II. The evolution of the architecture for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences

A. Evolution of the integrated follow-up architecture since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/227

1. Country-level follow-up

8. The real test of the success of an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences is whether it makes a difference in people's everyday lives by expediting the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing conference outcomes. Over the years, nationally owned development strategies have become the bedrock of nationally led development efforts. At the World Summit in 2005, Governments put the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals at the very heart of their national development strategies when they pledged to develop and implement comprehensive national development strategies.

9. The role of the United Nations has been to assist both developing and developed countries to integrate internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, into their national policies. In 2007, 67 United Nations country teams reported that they had assisted national Governments in drawing up and acting upon national development plans or poverty reduction strategies, including through country analyses of progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the financing of Goal targets. The adoption of comprehensive national strategies has helped to promote policy integration at the policy formulation and policy planning stages. With the national development plans in place, the key challenge now is to ensure that the coherence achieved in the planning process does not get lost during the implementation phase.

10. To ensure coherence and integration at the planning and implementation stages and to better draw upon the diverse expertise from across the United Nations system, including from non-resident agencies, the United Nations Development Group has developed several tools over the past years. These include the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its results matrix and the DevInfo database system. A more recent innovation is the United

Nations Development Group Policy Network to ensure coordinated and focused United Nations technical and policy advice for the planning and implementation of national development strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

11. To further explore ways to better support countries in the implementation of their comprehensive national development strategies, the United Nations also launched the "Delivering as one" initiative in eight pilot countries at the end of 2006. The pilot programmes have helped to identify ways in which the United Nations family can deliver in a more integrated and coordinated manner at the country level. The initiative has promoted joint programming based on joint analysis, joint thinking and joint prioritization and planning. The approach of one programme, one budget, one leader and, as applicable, one office has also helped to ensure the inclusion of the experiences and expertise of all United Nations agencies, including non-resident agencies.[1]

12. A second round of stocktaking reports from the eight pilot countries, gathered in a synthesis report to be published in June 2009, will be of particular relevance at a time when the United Nations Development Group is focusing on facilitating the application of the lessons learned from the pilot programmes to other countries, especially in the more than 90 countries that will be launching new development assistance frameworks during the next three years.

2. Regional-level conference follow-up

13. As a result of a vigorous policy of decentralization, the regional hubs of the United Nations are making an increasingly important contribution to the follow-up to conferences. The United Nations regional commissions channel policy experiences and regional perspectives into policy discussions at Headquarters. Examples include the dialogue of the Economic and Social Council with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions during its annual session and the dialogue with the Second Committee of the General Assembly. In addition, the regional hubs of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, through the regional directors' teams, ensure that global guidance is translated in a coherent manner into country-level guidance. Those teams provide technical support to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, and are also tasked with performance management of resident coordinators and country teams and quality assurance of programmes of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

14. As activities at the regional level have increased, there is a more pressing need to coordinate regional efforts. Two key regional coordination structures operate: the regional coordination mechanisms of the regional commissions and the regional directors' teams, composed of regional directors of the United Nations Development Group and relevant senior managers with direct supervisory responsibilities for agency engagement at the country level. The relationship between regional coordination mechanisms and regional directors' teams and their contribution to the work of the United Nations Development Group has been discussed recently at the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The regional directors' teams will continue to provide a regional perspective to the work of the United Nations Development Group as far as the operational work is

[1] To involve non-resident agencies in the common country programming, the United Nations Development Group implemented the non-resident agencies action plan.

concerned. The regional coordination mechanisms could provide a similar perspective to the High-level Committee on Programmes from a policy perspective. The degree of cooperation between the regional directors' teams and the regional coordination mechanisms currently varies between regions. For instance, in the Latin America and Caribbean region, the meetings of the regional directors' teams and the regional coordination mechanisms have been held back-to-back to facilitate cooperation.

3. Inter-agency follow-up

15. Efforts to promote integrated approaches at the country and regional levels are complemented by efforts at the global level to develop comprehensive United Nations system-wide responses to global challenges. Over the past several years, CEB, which brings together on a regular basis the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, has put particular emphasis on promoting horizontal and vertical coherence, in order to enable the United Nations system to perform as one and to be more than the sum of its parts. This effort has been guided by its "One United Nations" report[2] and the triennial comprehensive policy review by the General Assembly of operational activities for development.

16. CEB is playing an important role in promoting horizontal coherence across the United Nations system. It is taking the lead in developing common strategies, policies, methodologies and tools to address the challenges facing the United Nations system. Its work on the global food security crisis and climate change and its recent work on the global economic and financial crisis are examples of the efforts by the United Nations to deliver results by bringing the complementarities of the individual organizations to work together in jointly addressing global challenges (see CEB/2008/2). In response to the global economic and financial crisis, CEB recently agreed on nine joint initiatives. The objective of those initiatives is to assist countries and the global community to confront the multiple dimensions of the crisis, accelerate recovery and use the crisis as an opportunity to promote a fair and inclusive globalization.[3] CEB has also served as an umbrella for the development of several toolkits to mainstream cross-cutting issues into the programmes and activities of organizations across the system. Examples of such issues include employment and decent work, disaster risk reduction and the elimination of violence against women and girls.

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[2] Chief Executives Board for Coordination, "One United Nations: Catalyst for Progress and Change — How the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the United Nations system works" (New York, 2005).

[3] As outlined in the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2008/09 (see E/2009/67), the nine joint initiatives will focus on (a) additional financing for the most vulnerable (lead agencies: the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme); (b) food security (ongoing High-level Task Force, lead agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development); (c) trade (lead agencies: the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development); (d) a green economy initiative (ongoing initiative, lead agency: the United Nations Environment Programme); (e) a global jobs pact (lead agency: the International Labour Organization (OILO)); (f) a social protection floor (lead agencies: the World Health Organization and ILO); (g) humanitarian action, security and social stability (lead agency: WFP); (h) technology and innovation (lead agencies: the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the International Telecommunication Union); and (i) monitoring and analysis (lead agency: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

17. The United Nations Development Group plays a key role in promoting coherence by translating guidance of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council into actionable guidelines for United Nations country teams. With the support of the Development Operations Coordination Office, the Development Group prepares system-wide guidelines to enhance coordination, harmonization and alignment of United Nations development activities at the country level with the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. The integration of the United Nations Development Group as a third pillar of CEB, next to the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, helps to promote vertical coherence between the policy, programme and operational aspects of the work of the United Nations system. The flow of information between the three CEB pillars is ensured through regular meetings of the Chairs and of the respective Committee secretariats.

18. The development-related work of CEB has been complemented by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, which serves as a platform within the United Nations for strategic analysis and the provision of coherent advice to countries and the international community on economic and social issues. Through the work of its nine thematic clusters, which reflect key areas of the United Nations development agenda, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs has stimulated cooperation and helped to better draw upon the expertise of the centres of excellence in its various entities and to forge stronger cooperation among the different United Nations regions. Recent examples include the central role of the Executive Committee in the preparation of the 2008 high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and its contribution to the formulation of a United Nations system-wide response to the world economic and financial crisis. The latter included the preparation of an Executive Committee strategic paper on the financial crisis. The Executive Committee is also reviewing how it can best make a contribution to the integrated monitoring and analysis system as part of the above-mentioned nine joint crisis initiatives adopted by the recent meeting of CEB.

19. Progress has also been made in enhancing the programmatic coherence of the work of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the one hand and of the Bretton Woods institutions on the other hand. This has been achieved through increased collaboration. At the global level, examples of such collaboration include the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group. Some of the agencies also have highly developed country- and regional-level collaboration, especially with the World Bank. To institutionalize the principles of collaboration, the United Nations and the World Bank are developing several partnership documents. One recent example is a partnership framework for crisis and post-crisis situations, signed in October 2008, which aims to reduce transaction costs for partner countries and increase the coherence and impact of assistance.

4. Intergovernmental-level follow-up

20. At the intergovernmental level, the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits is subject to a three-tiered review. In the first instance, the follow-up is reviewed by a functional commission or other intergovernmental body, such as the executive boards of the funds and programmes or the governing bodies of the specialized agencies. The Economic and Social Council then considers and provides

overall guidance and coordination. All conferences are subject to review, at the high policy level, by the General Assembly.

21. The functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council have been taking the lead in the follow-up to several major United Nations conferences and summits. To ensure coherence between the work of the different functional commissions, they have held joint bureau meetings, and the chairpersons have participated in the sessions of other commissions. Moreover, the adoption of a multi-year programme of work in the context of the review of the working methods of the functional commissions has enabled them to work more closely with each other by providing greater predictability (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/29).

22. Cooperation between the functional commissions and the Economic and Social Council has also been enhanced. Since July 2002, the bureau of the Council and the chairpersons of the functional commissions have met annually to exchange views on how the subsidiary machinery of the Council could contribute to the work of the Council, and since 2007 the bureau of the Council has met together with all of the chairpersons of the functional commissions to discuss how they can contribute from their perspectives to the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum. The President of the Council has also made it a regular practice to address the subsidiary bodies of the Council.[4]

23. A particularly positive example is the close cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. In 2009, following a now well-established practice, the Council had before it a note by the Secretariat on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health" (E/CN.6/2009/13), which will serve as the input of the Commission into the 2009 annual ministerial review. In addition, this year the Commission discussed the issue during an expert panel discussion. The Commission also considered the gender perspectives of the financial crisis as an emerging issue during an interactive expert panel discussion. The outcome of both expert panels is available in the form of a summary submitted by the Chairperson.

24. Less progress has been made in engaging the governing bodies of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the follow-up work of the Economic and Social Council. The substantive discussion during the meetings of the executive boards has remained largely delinked from the conference follow-up work of the Council. This is mainly due to the agendas of the executive boards, including those of their joint meetings, which are not necessarily focused on the issues upon which a policy dialogue with the council could be conducted. Consequently, in their annual reports to the Council, the executive boards have not provided any substantive input or referred any policy issues to the Council or the General Assembly for decision and guidance, except for their reporting on the follow-up to the triennial comprehensive policy review.

25. Similarly, progress in strengthening cooperation with the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations specialized agencies has been limited. As separate,

[4] In 2009, the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed, inter alia, the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Committee for Development Policy and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

legally autonomous organizations, the specialized agencies have their own governing structures. Yet, their governing bodies have responsibilities for the follow-up to and monitoring of conferences. This is especially the case when they have been assigned a special role in the implementation of major United Nations conferences. Closer cooperation between the governing bodies of the agencies and the Economic and Social Council should hence be more strongly promoted. Recently, efforts have been made to promote dialogue among the heads of governing bodies during the coordination segment.

B. Follow-up to the 2005 World Summit: implementation of the new functions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly specific meeting focused on development

26. The review of the conference follow-up architecture shows that the Economic and Social Council has made much progress in putting into place vertical and horizontal linkages between the different entities involved in conference follow-up. However, a major gap that remained, prior to 2005, was the absence of a common thematic focus around which the different conference follow-up mechanisms could rally. Neither the General Assembly nor the Council provided such a substantive focus.

27. This gap was largely narrowed in 2005, when the World Summit Outcome mandated two new functions: the annual ministerial review and the biennial Development Cooperation Forum. In addition, in a subsequent resolution to follow up on the development outcome of the World Summit, the General Assembly decided to hold a specific meeting focused on development during the annual debate on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. This section of the present report illustrates how the new functions of the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly help to advance substantive integration by bringing Member States and the United Nations system together around specific aspects of the United Nations development agenda.

1. Annual ministerial review

28. The annual ministerial review has proven to be a particularly effective vehicle to promote substantive coherence to the conference follow-up work by the United Nations. By each year examining one selected cross-cutting theme common to the United Nations conferences, the review has quickly established itself as a forum that helps to crystallize the latest thinking and activities of Member States and the United Nations system on specific cross-cutting themes common to the conferences and has opened new avenues for linking follow-up at the global, regional and national levels.

29. By adopting its cross-cutting focus well in advance, the review has enabled the different actors tasked with the follow-up to United Nations conferences at the national, regional and global levels to actively contribute to the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council from their own perspectives. The resulting multifaceted treatment by the Council of key issues of the United Nations development agenda is unmatched both within the United Nations system and in other intergovernmental forums, in terms of both the diversity and the geographical scope of the actors involved in the process.

30. At the global level, the annual ministerial review has helped to make headway on bringing the views of a wide range of actors together. It has done so by drawing upon the expertise both of the intergovernmental bodies and the secretariats of the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes during the preparatory process and the review itself. The review also incorporates the input of the United Nations functional commissions, several of which have included a standing item on their agendas to contribute to the new functions of the Economic and Social Council.

31. The annual ministerial review also provides greater prominence to a regional perspective in global deliberations. In 2009, the regional commissions collaborated with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Health Organization to hold five multi-stakeholder regional ministerial meetings in preparation for the annual ministerial review: the South Asia regional meeting on "Financing strategies for health care", the Asia-Pacific regional ministerial meeting on "Promoting health literacy", the Western Asia regional ministerial meeting on "Preventing and controlling non-communicable diseases", the Latin America and the Caribbean regional ministerial meeting on "HIV and development in Latin America and the Caribbean" and the Africa Regional Ministerial Meeting on "e-health — information and communication technology for health" (see http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amrregional2009.shtml). These meetings highlighted issues that are of particular concern in the different regions. The active participation of Member States, the regional commissions and the regional offices of the United Nations funds and specialized agencies has helped to strengthen the link between country-level operations, regional activities and global-level discussions.

32. The annual ministerial review also promotes the adoption of integrated cross-sectoral approaches at the country level. In particular, for countries making presentations to the Economic and Social Council, the preparation of a national report has helped to bring the different ministries together around one table to identify key achievements, bottlenecks, lessons learned and examples of best practices. The presentations provide a direct channel to feed the country's perspectives into the work of the Council. They are unique opportunities for ministers to discuss hands-on measures on how to translate global priorities into national policies and how they can learn from the experiences of other countries and then contextualize these solutions for scaling up implementation in their countries.

33. The annual ministerial review also promotes multi-stakeholder involvement in the conference follow-up work of the Economic and Social Council. A non-governmental organization forum is organized immediately prior to the high-level segment of the Council, and the results feed into the annual ministerial review session. At the review session itself, stakeholders can participate in high-level round tables and the annual ministerial review innovation fair. Moreover, there are many opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in the preparatory processes of the annual ministerial review. This includes an e-discussion, a philanthropy event and national and regional preparatory meetings.

34. Taken together, these different elements of the annual ministerial review have strengthened the capacity of the Economic and Social Council to provide thematic coherence to the follow-up to conferences. To date, the input from a wide range of actors has ensured that the ministerial declarations of the Council on annual ministerial review themes have adopted a comprehensive multisectoral approach. They have hence provided helpful guidance, around which CEB can develop United

Nations system-wide approaches that bring to bear the complementarities and comparative advantages of the different United Nations system entities. The review of the implementation of the Council's ministerial declaration at the coordination segment of the subsequent annual session provides an additional opportunity for the Council to give further guidance to the United Nations system on the operationalization of the declaration.

2. Biennial Development Cooperation Forum

35. Another step forward in the integrated follow-up is the newly established biennial Development Cooperation Forum. The Forum reviews trends and progress in international development cooperation; identifies gaps and obstacles, with a view to making recommendations on practical measures and policy options to enhance coherence and effectiveness and promote development cooperation for the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; provides a platform for Member States to exchange lessons learned and share experiences; and, in accordance with the rules of procedure, is open to participation by all stakeholders (see General Assembly resolution 61/16).

36. The first Development Cooperation Forum, held in 2008, established the Forum as a focal point within the United Nations for holistic consideration of development cooperation with a balanced and multi-stakeholder participation. Policy coherence, aid commitments and allocation, the aid effectiveness agenda, country-level capacities and development strategies in South-South cooperation were issues which figured most prominently in the discussions. Building on the outcomes of the 2008 Forum, the Accra Agenda for Action adopted during the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008 (see A/63/539, annex), and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008, the 2010 Development Cooperation Forum will focus on the issue of aid policy coherence, with a view to moving from aid to more long-term sources of financing, mutual accountability and aid transparency in development cooperation and South-South and triangular cooperation.

37. By bringing together actors from diverse backgrounds, the Development Cooperation Forum has a particular edge in advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences. Through its work, it can help to identify ways of promoting greater policy coherence across different development cooperation policy areas. This point was also recognized at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which in its outcome document acknowledged the role of the Forum as a focal point within the United Nations system for holistic consideration of development cooperation.[5] At its 2010 session, the Forum will have an opportunity to make a significant contribution on how to ensure greater aid policy coherence to help countries move from aid to long-term sources of development financing.

38. Another major contribution that the Development Cooperation Forum can make to conference follow-up is to help emerging donors to get involved in a more systematic manner in advancing the implementation of conference outcomes. The

[5] Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (General Assembly resolution 63/239, annex, para. 47).

2010 Forum will have South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as one of its areas of focus. Making headway on this issue is becoming increasingly important at a time when Southern donors are playing a more prominent role in advancing the United Nations development agenda.

39. With its inclusive participation, broad ownership and interactive discussions, the Development Cooperation Fund has provided important new avenues to draw more systematically upon the diverse expertise of a wide range of stakeholders whose important role in advancing the integrated follow-up to conferences is widely recognized. This was also a clear message both of the Rome Stakeholder Forum on "The role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness", held in June 2008, and of the Accra Agenda for Action. The 2010 Forum will build on the partnerships that the Development Cooperation Forum has established with civil society, parliaments, local governments and the private sector.

40. While the Development Cooperation Forum has not yet addressed in depth its mandate to strengthen the link between the normative and the operational work of the United Nations system, that mandate presents an opportunity for the Forum to tighten the focus of United Nations development cooperation on internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. This could be an important contribution to the next comprehensive policy review of operational activities in 2012.

3. Specific meeting of the General Assembly focused on development

41. Since 2006, the General Assembly has held a specific meeting focused on development, in the form of a general debate. Assembly resolution 60/265 mandated that the meeting be held during the debate on the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome and that the meeting should include an assessment of progress over the previous year. No official documentation has been prepared for the meetings, and there has been no formal outcome.

42. During the past three years, the debate, held in December, covered a range of issues, such as the state of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, the world economic and financial situation, climate change and its impact on economic and social development, peace and security and the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in facilitating development. Just prior to the meeting in 2007, the Assembly held an informal interactive panel discussion which provided information to delegations about current trends and their impacts on development efforts. The panel discussion engaged the delegations actively and enriched the deliberations in the subsequent meeting on development.

43. Several of the above-mentioned issues that were addressed during the development meeting were also addressed, however, in a series of other development-related meetings of the Assembly plenary. For example, during the sixty-third session, development-related events included the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, the High-level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs, the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action, the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development and the upcoming Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. There were also interactive panel discussions on the global financial crisis, the world financial and economic crisis and its impact

on development, the global food crisis and the right to food, access to education in emergency and post-crisis and transition situations caused by man-made conflicts or natural disasters and taking collective action to end human trafficking.

44. Given the multitude of development-related meetings in the General Assembly plenary and relevant committees, the impact of the special development meeting has been limited. Delegations might therefore want to consider whether a specific meeting focused on development should be organized only during years when there are no high-level events focused on development.

45. As pointed out by Member States during past meetings, the development meeting could set the scene for the development work of the General Assembly. Member States could use the meeting to draw attention to major new developments that could have an impact on the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and make suggestions on how the Assembly and its relevant committees should respond. If the meeting is to set the scene for the development work of the Assembly during any given regular session, delegations might want to consider holding the meeting on development during the opening of the session rather than towards the end of it. If, however, the meeting continues to be organized towards the end of the regular session, the meeting could be used to take stock of deliberations during the session and guide all the stakeholders to implement what has been agreed upon during the session. In the latter case, the expected outcome, in the form of a Presidential summary, would serve as a guiding document for all the development partners.

46. Moving forward, delegations might also want to review the format of the meeting. In the past, following the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, the meeting has taken the form of a plenary debate. Given the positive response of delegations to the interactive panel discussions that have been organized on several occasions, and specifically for the development meeting in 2007, delegations might want to consider recommending a more interactive format for the development meeting itself.

III. Implications for the periodicity of the report of the Secretary-General on the integrated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences

A. Objective and value added of future reports of the Secretary-General

47. In Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/29, delegations requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations on the periodicity of the report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of the report. Such a review seems timely, given that the current reporting arrangement was mandated before the conception and launch of the new functions of the

Council.[6] Hence, it seems worthwhile to review whether a different reporting arrangement could better help to advance the integrated follow-up to conferences.

48. Past reports of the Secretary-General, as mandated, have reviewed the contribution of the entire follow-up architecture established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B, 60/265 and 61/16 for the integrated follow-up to conferences. Given the broad scope of the resolutions, it has proven difficult to provide a comprehensive assessment of the progress made in promoting both architectural and thematic coherence. As most of the provisions in those resolutions relating to the follow-up architecture have been implemented, it is suggested that in future reports of the Secretary-General the main emphasis be on substantive coherence.

49. The main value added of future reports of the Secretary-General on integrated follow-up to conferences could be to provide a better understanding of the progress that countries have made to date in implementing the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences. The reports should give an overview of how the different parts of the United Nations follow-up architecture, both on the United Nations system side and the intergovernmental side, have contributed to the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits. For developed countries, the report could provide an overview of the policies and measures they have adopted to promote the integrated follow-up to conferences. For developing countries, the report could focus on the progress they have made in advancing the outcomes of United Nations conferences in an integrated way, in particular through the implementation of comprehensive national strategies to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the support provided by the international community.

50. The United Nations development agenda could provide a framework for analysis in a future report. To keep the report focused, it could draw upon the experiences of the countries that made national voluntary presentations. It could, for instance, focus on the progress made in advancing the integrated follow-up to conferences on the United Nations development agenda themes taken up during the annual ministerial review. This would ensure that over time there would be a comprehensive coverage of the substantive themes.

51. It should be noted that, while the proposed report on the integrated follow-up and the report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities would both examine the linkages between normative guidance and country-level activities, their focus and scope would be very different. While the focus in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review would largely be on how to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations system country-level operations, under national ownership and leadership, the integrated follow-up process would take the country-owned development strategies as a starting point for its analysis. The latter process would assess from a policy perspective how countries have made progress in advancing the integrated follow-up to conferences by promoting comprehensive strategies at the various levels and how the United Nations system has helped in promoting such an integrated approach.

[6] Paragraph 39 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B established the agenda item, to be taken up annually to consider the assessment of the implementation of the conference outcomes and to consider the relevant chapters of the annual report of the Council.

B. Periodicity of future reporting of the Secretary-General

52. Given the possible synergies between the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the integrated follow-up report, it is proposed that a report of the Secretary-General should be prepared every four years, a year before the report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the subsequent adoption of the new strategic documents of the agencies, funds and programmes.

53. Preparing the integrated follow-up report prior to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review report would have several advantages. Firstly, such timing would provide the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with an overview of the progress that has been made in promoting policy coherence in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda before providing new operational guidance to the United Nations system during the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Secondly, preparing such a report in connection with the policy review would help to limit the additional reporting burden, as the Secretary-General would be able to draw upon the assessment of the report on the integrated follow-up to conferences in preparation for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. The report would also provide useful guidance to the agencies, funds and programmes as they enter a new four-year planning cycle.

IV. Recommendations

54. **Based on the above, delegations might wish to consider requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a quadrennial report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits and to submit the first report at the 2015 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the seventieth session of the General Assembly. It is proposed that such a report should:**

(a) **Be prepared a year prior to the report of the Secretary-General for the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and every four years thereafter;**

(b) **Assess the progress made by countries, both developing and developed, in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;**

(c) **Enable the Assembly and the Council to determine the areas in which additional intergovernmental oversight and guidance are most needed to advance the integrated follow-up to conferences;**

(d) **From a policy perspective, assess how the individual conference follow-up mechanisms have contributed to the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences;**

(e) **Assess the effectiveness of the United Nations system in providing holistic policy advice in support of national policies or, if applicable, comprehensive national development strategies aimed at meeting internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;**

(f) **Focus on case studies of a few developing and developed countries and a different subset of United Nations development agenda themes each time, ensuring that all the themes would be covered over time;**

(g) **Build upon relevant ongoing reporting by Member States and the United Nations system and, whenever possible, make use of impact evaluation tools and case studies from within the United Nations system.**